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THE NEGRO SERVANT



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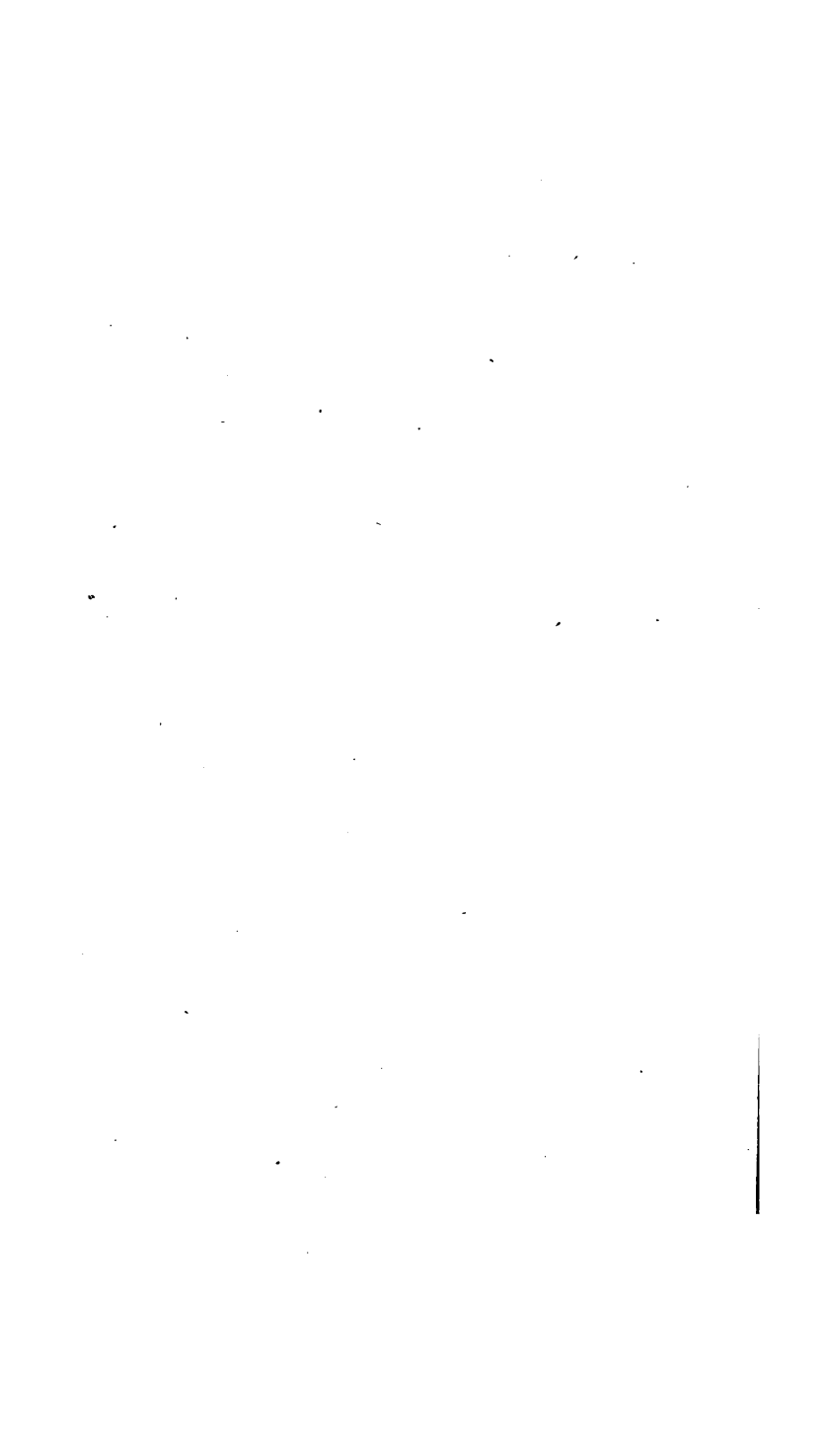




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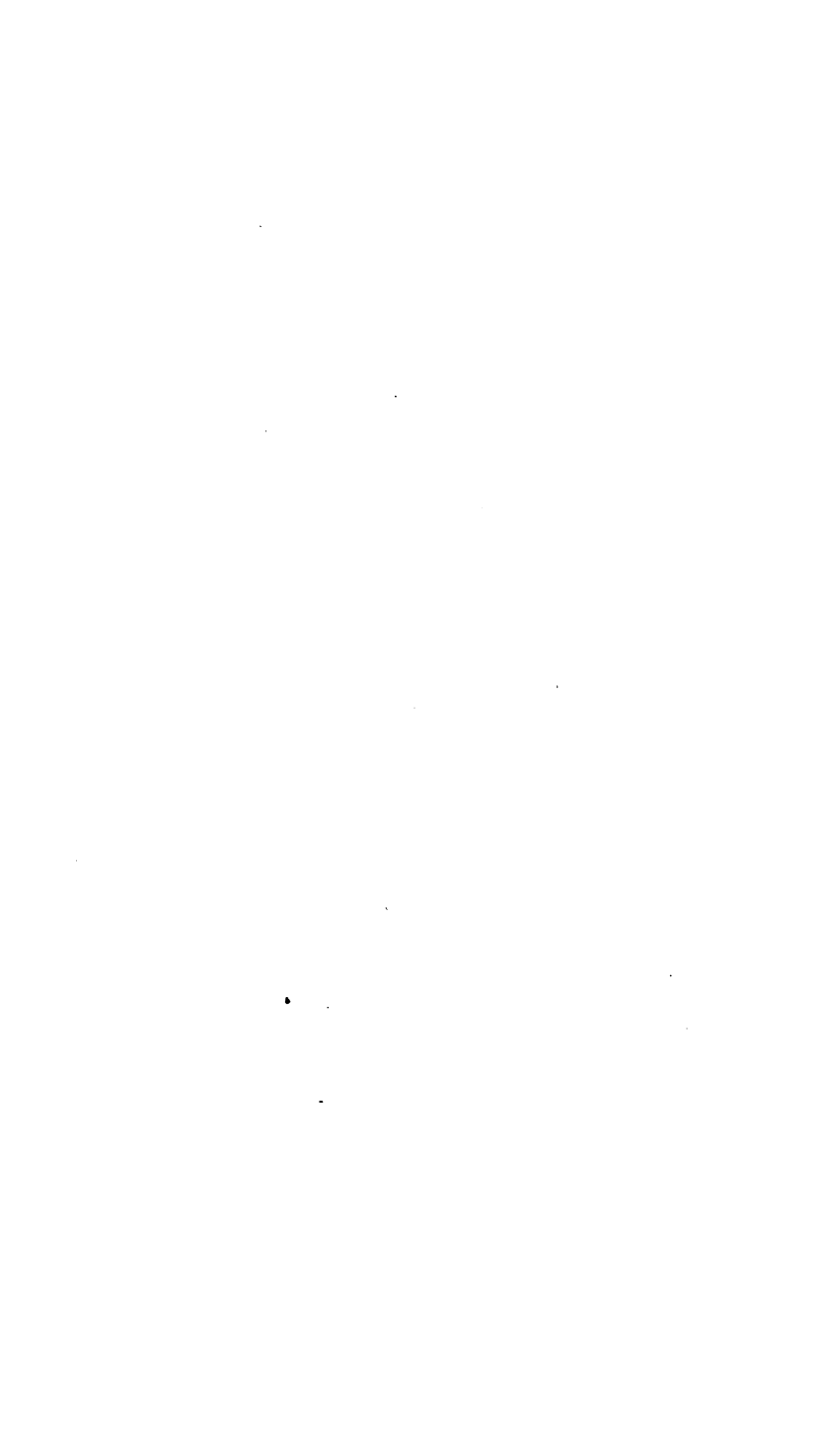
THE REV. LEGH RICHMOND, M.A.,
LATE RECTOR OF TURVEY, BEDFORDSHIRE.



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THE NEGRO SERVANT.

PART I.



F a map of the world, instead of being coloured, as is usual, with many gay and brilliant tints, in order to distinguish its various continents, kingdoms, and islands from each other, were to be painted with darker or brighter hues corresponding with the spiritual character of the inhabitants, what a gloomy aspect would be presented, to the eye of the *Christian* geographer, by the greater portion of the habitable globe ! How dark would be the shade thus cast over the larger districts of the vast continents of Asia and America ! and what a mass of gloom would characterize the African quarter of the world !

Here and there a bright spot would mark the

residence of a few missionary labourers, devoting themselves to God, and scattering the rays of Christian light among the surrounding heathen ; but over the greater part "the blackness of darkness" would emblematically describe the iron reign of Mohammedan superstition and Pagan idolatry.

The Christian prays that God would have "respect unto the covenant ; for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." He hopes to see the nations open their eyes, and turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith.

The curse originally pronounced on the descendants of Ham has, in a variety of respects, both temporal and spiritual, been awfully fulfilled—"A servant of servants shall he be." Slavery, as well of mind as body, has been continued amongst the Africans through their generations in a manner which at once proves the truth of the Divine prediction, and yet calls aloud for the ardent prayers and active exertions of Christians in their behalf. The time will come when the heathen shall be proved to have been given to Christ "for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." The degraded Hottentot, and the poor benighted negro,

will look from the ends of the earth unto Jesus, and be saved. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." The Redeemer "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied," in beholding the gathering together, not only of the outcasts of Israel that are ready to perish, but of churches and people from all the tongues, and kindreds, and nations of the earth. In the day of his appearing, the sons of Africa will vie with their brethren of the north, and the west, and the east, in resounding the praises of God their Saviour from one end of the earth to the other.

In the meantime, we rejoice in every occasional instance of the love and power of God in effecting the conversion of some, who appear as the first-fruits of that harvest which shall hereafter so fruitfully grow up, to the honour of Christ and the blessedness of his redeemed people.

The following narrative of real facts may, perhaps, illustrate the importance of the foregoing remarks.

During a residence of some years' continuance in the neighbourhood of the sea, an officer of the navy called upon me, and stated that he had just taken a lodging in the parish for his wife and children; and had a negro, who had been three years in his service. "The lad is a deserving fellow," said the officer, "and

he has a great desire to be baptized. I have promised him to ask you to do it, if you have not any objections."

"Does he know anything," replied I, "of the principles of the Christian religion?"

"Oh yes, I am sure he does," answered the captain; "for he talks a great deal about it in the kitchen, and often gets laughed at for his pains; but he takes it all very patiently."

"Does he behave well as your servant?"

"Yes, that he does: he is as honest and civil a fellow as ever came on board ship, or lived in a house."

"Was he always so well behaved?"

"No," said the officer; "when I first had him he was often very unruly and deceitful; but for the last two years he has been quite like another creature."

"Well, sir, I shall be very glad to see him, and think it probable I shall wish to go through a course of instruction and examination; during which I shall be able to form a judgment how far it will be right to admit him to the sacrament of baptism. Can he read?"

"Yes," replied his master; "he has been taking great pains to learn to read for some time past, and can make out a chapter in the Bible pretty well, as

my maid-servant informs me. He speaks English better than many of his countrymen, but you will find it a little broken. When will it be convenient that I should send him over to you?"

"To-morrow afternoon, sir, if you please."

"He shall come to you about four o'clock, and you shall see what you can make of him."

With this promise he took his leave. I felt glad of an opportunity of instructing a native of that land whose wrongs and injuries had often caused me to sigh and mourn; the more so, when I reflected *who* had been the aggressors.

At the appointed hour my negro disciple arrived. He was a very young-looking man, with a sensible, lively, and pleasing countenance.

I desired him to sit down, and said, "Your master informs me that you wish to have some conversation with me respecting Christian baptism."

"Yes, sir; me very much wish to be a Christian," said he.

"Why do you wish so?"

"Because me know that Christian go to heaven when he die."

"How long have you had that wish?" I said.

"Ever since me heard one goot minister preach in America, two years ago."

"Where were you born?"

"In Africa. Me was very little boy when me was made slave by the white men."

"How was that?"

"Me left father and mother one day at home to go get shells by the sea-shore, and as me was stooping down to gather them up, some white sailors came out of a boat and took me away. Me never see father nor mother again."

"And what became of you then?"

"Me was put into ship, and brought to Jamaica and sold to a master, who kept me in his house to serve him some years; when, about three years ago, Captain W——, my master, dat spoke to you, bought me to be his servant on board his ship. And he be goot master: he gave me my liberty, and made me free, and me live with him ever since."

"And what thoughts had you about your soul all that time before you went to America?" I asked him.

"Me no care for my soul at all before den. No man teach me one word about my soul."

"Well, now tell me further about what happened to you in America. How came you there?"

"My master take me dere in his ship, and he stop dere one month, and den me hear de goot minister."

"And what did the minister say?"

"He said me was a great sinner."

"What! did he speak to you in particular?"

"Yes, me t'ink so; for dere was great many to hear him, but he tell dem all about me."

"What did he say?"

"He say about all de t'ings dat were in my heart."

"What things?"

"My sin, my ignorance, my know not'ing, my believe not'ing. De goot minister make me see dat me *t'ink* not'ing goot, me *do* not'ing goot."

"And what else did he tell you?"

"He sometime look me in de face, and say dat Jesus Christ came to die for sinners, poor black sinners as well as white sinners. Me t'ought dis was very goot, very goot indeed, to do so for a wicked sinner."

"And what made you think this was all spoken to you in particular?"

"Because me sure no such wicked sinner as me in all de place. De goot minister must know me was dere."

"And what did you think of yourself while he preached about Jesus Christ?"

"Sir, me was very much afraid when he said the wicked must be turned into hell-fire. For me felt

dat me was very wicked sinner, and dat make me cry. And he talk much about de love of Christ to sinners, and dat make me cry more. And me t'ought me must love Jesus Christ ; but me not know how, and dat make me cry again."

" Did you hear more sermons than one during that month ? "

" Yes, sir ; master gave me leave to go t'ree times, and all de times me wanted to love Jesus more, and do what Jesus said ; but my heart seem sometime hard, like a stone."

" Have you ever heard any preaching since that time ? "

" Never, till me hear sermon at dis church last Sunday, and den me long to be baptized in Jesus' name ; for me had no Christian friends to baptize me when little child."

" And what have been your thoughts all the time since you first heard those sermons in America. Did you tell anybody what you then felt ? "

" No, me speak to nobody but to God. Den de goot minister say dat God hear de cry of de poor ; so me cry to God, and he hear me. And me often t'ink about Jesus Christ, and wish to be like him."

" Can you read ? "

" A little."

"Who taught you to read?"

"God teach me to read."

"What do you mean by saying so?"

"God give me desire to read, and dat make reading easy. Master give me Bible, and one sailor show me de letters; and so me learned to read by myself, with God's good help."

"And what do you read in the Bible?"

"Oh, me read all about Jesus Christ, and how he loved sinners; and wicked men killed him, and he died, and came again from de grave; and all dis for poor negro. And it sometime make me cry to t'ink that Christ love so poor negro."

"And what do the people say about your reading, and praying, and attention to the things of God?"

"Some wicked people, dat do not love Jesus Christ, call me great fool, and negro dog, and black hypocrite. And dat make me sometimes feel angry; but den me remember Christian must not be angry, for Jesus Christ was called ugly black names, and he was quiet as a lamb; and so den me remember Jesus Christ, and me say not'ing again to dem."

I was much delighted with the simplicity and apparent sincerity of this poor negro, and wished to ascertain what measure of light and feeling he possessed on a few leading points. St. Paul's summary

of religion* occurring to me, I said, "Tell me, what is faith? What is your faith? What do you believe about Jesus Christ and your own soul?"

"Me believe," said he, "dat Jesus Christ came into de world to save sinners; and dough me be chief of sinners, yet Jesus will save me, dough me be only poor black negro."

"What is your hope? What do you hope for, both as to this life and that which is to come?"

"Me hope Jesus Christ will take good care of me, and keep me from sin and harm, while me live here; and me hope, when me come to die, to go and live with him always, and never die again."

"What are your thoughts about Christian love or charity,—I mean, whom and what do you most love?"

"Me love God de Father, because he was so goot to send his Son. Me love Jesus Christ, because he love men. Me love all men, black men and white men too; for God made dem all. Me love goot Christian people, because Jesus love dem, and dey love Jesus."

Such was my first conversation with this young disciple. I rejoiced in the prospect of receiving him into the Church, agreeably to his desire. I wished,

* "Now abideth, faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. xiii. 13).

however, to converse somewhat further, and inquire more minutely into his conduct, and promised to ride over and see him in a few days at his master's lodgings.

When he was gone, I thought within myself, God has indeed redeemed souls by the blood of his Son, "out of *every* kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. If many of them for a season are devoted to earthly slavery,* through the cruel avarice of man, yet, blessed be God, some amongst them are, through Divine grace, called to the glorious liberty of the children of God ; and so are redeemed from the slavery of him who takes so many captive at his will. It is a happy thought, that "Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ; O sing praises unto the Lord."

PART II.

WHEN we endeavour to estimate the worth of an immortal soul, we are utterly lost in the attempt. The art of spiritual computation is not governed by the same principles and rules which guide our speculations

* This circumstance took place before the abolition of the British slave-trade.

concerning earthly objects. The value of gold, silver, merchandise, food, raiment, lands, and houses, is easily regulated, by custom, convenience, or necessity. Even the more capricious and imaginary worth of a picture, medal, or statue, may be reduced to something of systematic rule. Crowns and sceptres have had their adjudged valuation; and kingdoms have been bought and sold for sums of money. But who can affix the adequate price to a human soul? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The principles of ordinary arithmetic all fail here; and we are constrained to say, that He alone who paid the ransom for sinners, and made the souls of men his "purchased possession," can comprehend and solve the arduous question. They are, indeed, "bought with a price," but are "not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." We shall only ascertain the value of a soul when we shall be fully able to estimate the worth of a Saviour.

Too often have we been obliged to hear what is the price which sordid, unfeeling avarice, has affixed to the *body* of a poor negro slave; let us now attempt,

while we pursue the foregoing narrative, to meditate on the value which Infinite Mercy has attached to his *soul*.

Not many days after my first interview with my negro disciple, I went from home with the design of visiting and conversing with him again at his master's house, which was situated in a part of the parish nearly four miles distant from my own. The road which I took lay over a lofty down, which commands a prospect of scenery seldom exceeded in beauty and magnificence. It gave birth to silent but instructive contemplation.

The down itself was covered with sheep, grazing on its wholesome and plentiful pasture. Here and there a shepherd's boy kept his appointed station, and watched over the flock committed to his care. I viewed it as an emblem of my own situation and employment. Adjoining the hill lay an extensive parish, wherein many souls were given me to watch over, and render an account of at the day of the great Shepherd's appearing. The pastoral scene before me seemed to be a living parable, illustrative of my own spiritual charge. I felt a prayerful wish that the good Shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep, might enable me to be faithful to my trust.

It occurred to me, about the same time, that

young African friend was a sheep of another more distant fold, which Christ will yet bring to hear his voice. For there shall be one fold and one Shepherd, and all nations shall be brought to acknowledge that He alone "restoreth our souls, and leadeth us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." On the left hand of the hill, as I advanced eastward, and immediately under its declivity, extended a beautiful tract of land intersected by a large arm of the sea, which (as the tide was fast flowing in) formed a broad lake or haven of three miles in length. Woods, villages, cottages, and churches surrounded it in most pleasing variety of prospect. Beyond this lay a large fleet of ships of war, and not far from it another of merchantmen, both safe at anchor, covering a tract of the sea of several miles in extent. Beyond this, again, I saw the fortifications, dock-yards, and extensive public edifices of a large seaport town. The sun shone upon the windows of the buildings and the flags of the ships with great brightness, and added much to the splendour of the view.

I thought of the concerns of empires and plans of statesmen, the fate of nations and the horrors of war. Happy will be that day when He shall make wars to cease unto the end of the earth, and peace to be established in its borders.

In the meantime, let us be thankful for those vessels and instruments of defence, which, in the hands of God, preserve our country from the hand of the enemy and the fury of the destroyer. What, thought I, do we not owe to the exertions of the numerous crews on board those ships, who leave their homes to fight their country's battles and maintain its cause, whilst we sit every man under his vine and fig-tree, tasting the sweets of a tranquillity unknown to most other nations in these days of conflict and bloodshed !

On my right hand, to the south and south-east, the unbounded ocean displayed its mighty waves. It was covered with vessels of every size, sailing in all directions: some outward-bound to the most distant parts of the world ; others, after a long voyage, returning home, laden with the produce of remote climes : some going forth in search of the enemy ; others sailing back to port after the hard-fought engagement, and bearing the trophies of victory in the prizes which accompanied them home.

At the south-west of the spot on which I was riding extended a beautiful semicircular bay, of about nine or ten miles in circumference, bounded by high cliffs of white, red, and brown-coloured earth. Beyond this lay a range of hills, whose tops are often buried in

cloudy mists, but which then appeared clear and distinct. This chain of hills, meeting with another from the north, bounds a large fruitful vale, whose fields, now ripe for harvest, proclaimed the goodness of God in the rich provision which he makes for the sons of men. It is he who prepares the corn ; he crowns the year with his goodness, and his paths drop fatness. "They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness ; and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks ; the valleys also are covered over with corn ; they shout for joy, they also sing."

"The roving sight
Pursues its pleasing course o'er neighbouring hills,
Of many a different form and different hue :
Bright with the rip'ning corn, or green with grass,
Or dark with clover's purple bloom."

As I looked upon the numerous ships moving before me, I remembered the words of the psalmist : "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters ; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths : their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth

them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet ; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men !” (Ps. cvii. 23–31.)

The negro servant then occurred to my mind. Perhaps, thought I, some of these ships are bound to Africa, in quest of that most infamous object of merchandise, a cargo of black slaves. Inhuman traffic for a nation that bears the name of Christian ! Perhaps these very waves, that are now dashing on the rocks at the foot of this hill, have, on the shores of Africa, borne witness to the horrors of forced separation between wives and husbands, parents and children, torn asunder by merciless men, whose hearts have been hardened against the common feeling of humanity by long custom in this cruel trade. “Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy.” When shall the endeavours of that truly Christian *friend* of the oppressed negro be crowned with success, in the abolition of this wicked and disgraceful traffic ? *

As I pursued the meditations which this magnifi-

* The day has since arrived, when the persevering efforts of Mr. Wilberforce to accomplish this happy purpose have been fully answered. *The slave trade is abolished !* The Church of God rejoices at this triumph of the cause of Christ over the powers of darkness.

cent and varied scenery excited in my mind, I approached the edge of a tremendous perpendicular cliff, with which the down terminates. I dismounted from my horse, and tied it to a bush. The breaking of the waves against the foot of the cliff at so great a distance beneath me, produced an incessant and pleasing murmur. The sea-gulls were flying between the top of the cliff where I stood and the rocks below, attending upon their nests, built in the holes of the cliff. The whole scene in every direction was grand and impressive : it was suitable to devotion. The Creator appeared in the works of his creation, and called upon the creatures to honour and adore. To the believer, this exercise is doubly delightful. He possesses a right to the enjoyment of nature and providence, as well as to the privileges of grace. His title-deed runs thus : "All things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's."

I cast my eye downwards a little to the left towards a small cove, the shore of which consists of fine hard sand. It is surrounded by fragments of rock, chalk-cliffs, and steep banks of broken earth. Shut out from human intercourse and dwellings, it seems formed for retirement and contemplation. On one of these

rocks I unexpectedly observed a man sitting with a book which he was reading. The place was near two hundred yards perpendicularly below me, but I soon discovered, by his dress, and by the black colour of his features contrasted with the white rocks beside him, that it was no other than my negro disciple, with, as I doubted not, a Bible in his hand. I rejoiced at this unlooked-for opportunity of meeting him in so solitary and interesting a situation. I descended a steep bank, winding by a kind of rude staircase, formed by fishermen and shepherds' boys, in the side of the cliff down to the shore. He was intent on his book, and did not perceive me till I approached very near to him.

"William, is that you?"

"Ah, massa! me very glad to see you. How came massa into dis place? Me t'ought nobody here, but only God and me."

"I was coming to your master's house to see you, and rode round by this way for the sake of the prospect. I often come here in fine weather, to look at the sea and shipping. Is that your Bible?"

"Yes, sir; * dis my dear goot Bible."

* In the course of conversation, he sometimes addressed me with the word "Massa," for "Master," according to the well-known habit of the negro slaves in the West Indies; and sometimes "Sir," as he was taught since his arrival in England; but the former word seemed to be most familiar to him.

"I am glad," said I, "to see you so well employed. It is a good sign, William."

"Yes, massa, a sign that God is goot to me; but me never goot to God."

"How so?"

"Me never t'ank him enough; me never pray to him enough; me never remember enough who give me all dese goot t'ings. Massa, me afraid my heart is very bat. Me wish me was like you."

"Like me, William! why, you are like me, a poor helpless sinner, that must, as well as yourself, perish in his sins, unless God, of his infinite mercy and grace, pluck him as a brand from the burning, and make him an instance of distinguishing love and favour. There is no difference; we have both come short of the glory of God: all have sinned."

"No, me not like you massa; me t'ink nobody like me,—nobody feel such a heart as me."

"Yes, William, your feelings, I am persuaded, are like those of every truly convinced soul, who sees the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the greatness of the price which Christ Jesus paid for the sinner's ransom. You can say, in the words of the hymn,—

'I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.'"

"Oh yes, sir; me believe that Jesus died for poor

negro. What would become of poor wicked negro if Christ no die for him? But he die for de chief of sinners, and dat make my heart sometimes quite glad."

"What part of the Bible were you reading, William?"

"Me read how de man upon de cross spoke to Christ, and Christ spoke to him. Now dat man's prayer just do for me: 'Lord, remember me.' Lord, remember poor negro sinner; dis is my prayer every morning, and sometimes at night too. When me cannot t'ink of many words, den me say de same again: Lord, remember poor negro sinner."

"And be sure, William, the Lord hears that prayer. He pardoned and accepted the thief upon the cross, and he will not reject you; he will in no wise cast out any that come to him."

"No, sir, I believe it; but dere is so much sin in my heart, it makes me afraid and sorry. Massa, do you see dese limpets,* how fast dey stick to de rocks here? Just so, sin sticks fast to my heart."

"It may be so, William; but take another comparison. Do you cleave to Jesus Christ, by faith in his death and righteousness, as those limpets cleave

* A kind of shell-fish, which abound in the place where we were, and which stick to the rocks with exceeding great force.

to the rock, and neither seas nor storms shall separate you from his love."

"Dat is just what me want."

"Tell me, William, is not that very sin which you speak of a burden to you? You do not love it? You would be glad to obtain strength against it, and to be freed from it, would you not?"

"Oh yes. Me give all dis world, if me had it, to be without sin."

"Come, then, and welcome, to Jesus Christ, my brother. His blood cleanseth from all sin. He gave himself as a ransom for sinners. He hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Come, freely come to Jesus, the Saviour of sinners."

"Yes, massa," said the poor fellow weeping; "me will come. But me come very slow—very slow, massa: me want to run, me want to fly. Jesus is very goot to poor negro, to send you to tell him all dis."

"But this is not the first time you have heard these truths?"

"No, sir; dey have been comfort to my soul many

times, since me hear goot minister preach in America, as me tell you last week at your house."

"Well, now I hope, William, that since God has been so graciously pleased to open your eyes, and affect your mind with such a great sense of his goodness in giving his Son to die for your sake—I hope that you do your endeavour to keep his commandments; I hope you strive to behave well to your master and mistress, and fellow-servants. He that is a Christian inwardly will be a Christian outwardly. He that truly and savingly believes in Christ, will show his faith by his works, as the apostle says. Is it not so, William?"

"Yes, sir; me want to do so. Me want to be faithful. Me sorry to t'ink how bat servant me was before de goot t'ings of Jesus Christ come to my heart. Me wish to do well to my massa, when he see me, and when he not see; for me know God always see me. Me know dat if me sin against mine own massa, me sin against God, and God be very angry with me. Beside, how can me love Christ, if me do not what Christ tell me? Me love my fellow-servants, dough, as I tell you before, dey do not much love me; and I pray God to bless dem. And when dey say bat t'ings, and try to make me angry, den me t'ink, if Jesus Christ were in poor negro's place,

he would not revile and answer again with bat words and temper, but he say little and pray much. And so den me say not'ing at all, but pray to God to forgive dem."

The more I conversed with this African convert, the more satisfactory were the evidences of his mind being spiritually enlightened, and his heart effectually wrought upon by the grace of God.

The circumstances of the place in which we met together contributed much to the interesting effect which the conversation produced on my mind. The little cove or bay was beautiful in the extreme. The air was calm and serene. The sun shone, but we were sheltered from its rays by the cliffs. One of these was stupendously lofty and large. It was white as snow. Its summit hung directly over our heads. The sea-fowls were flying around it. Its whiteness was occasionally chequered with dark-green masses of samphire, which grew there. On the other side, and behind us, was a more gradual declivity of many-coloured earths, interspersed with green patches of grass and bushes, and little streams of water trickling down the bank, and mingling with the sea at the bottom. At our feet the waves were advancing over shelves of rocks covered with a great variety of seaweeds, which swam in little fragments, and displayed

much beauty and elegance of form as they were successively thrown upon the sand.

Ships of war and commerce were seen at different distances. Fishermen were plying their trade in boats nearer the shore. The noise of the flowing tide combined with the voices of the sea-gulls over our heads, and now and then a distant gun, fired from the ships as they passed along, added much to the peculiar sensations to which the scene gave birth. Occasionally the striking of oars upon the waves, accompanied by the boatmen's song, met the ear. The sheep aloft upon the down sometimes mingled their bleatings with the other sounds. Thus, all nature seemed to unite in impressing an attentive observer's heart with affecting thoughts.

I remained for a considerable time in conversation with the negro, finding that his master was gone from home for the day, and had given him liberty for some hours. I spoke to him on the nature, duty, and privilege of Christian baptism ; pointed out to him, from a prayer-book which I had with me, the clear and scriptural principles of our own Church upon that head ; and found that he was very desirous of conforming to them. He appeared to me to be well qualified for receiving that sacramental pledge of his Redeemer's love ; and I rejoiced in the prospect of

beholding him no longer a "stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God."

"God," said I to him, "has promised to 'sprinkle many nations,' not only with the waters of baptism, but also with the dews of his heavenly grace. He says he will not only 'pour water on him that is thirsty,' but 'I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.'"

"Yes, massa," said he, "he can make me to be clean in heart, and of a right spirit. He can purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; he can wash me, and I shall be whiter dan snow."

"May God give you these blessings, and confirm you in every good gift!"

I was much pleased with the affectionate manner in which he spoke of his parents, from whom he had been stolen in his childhood, and his wishes that God might direct them by some means to the knowledge of the Saviour.

"Who knows," I said, "but some of these ships may be carrying a missionary to the country where they live, to declare the good news of salvation to your countrymen, and to your own dear parents in particular, if they are yet alive."

"Oh, my dear fader and moder! My dear gra-

cious Saviour," exclaimed he, leaping from the ground as he spoke, "if dou wilt but save deir souls, and tell dem what dou hast done for sinner ; but—"

He stopped, and seemed much affected.

"My friend," said I, "I will now pray with you, for your own soul, and for those of your parents also."

"Do, massa; dat is very goot and kind. Do pray for poor negro souls here and everywhere."

This was a new and solemn "house of prayer." The sea-sand was our floor ; the heavens were our roof ; the cliffs, the rocks, the hills, and the waves formed the walls of our chamber. It was not, indeed, a "place where prayer was wont to be made ;" but for this once it became a hallowed spot. It will by me ever be remembered as such. The presence of God was there. I prayed : the negro wept. His heart was full. I felt with him, and could not but weep likewise.

The last day will show whether our tears were not the tears of sincerity and Christian love.

It was time for my return. I leaned upon his arm as we ascended the steep cliff on my way back to my horse, which I had left at the top of the hill. Humility and thankfulness were marked in his countenance. I leaned upon his arm with the feelings of

brother. It was a relationship I was happy to own.

I took him by the hand at parting, appointed one more interview previous to the day of baptizing him, and bade him farewell for the present.

"God bless you, my dear massa!"

"And you, my fellow-Christian, for ever and ever!"

PART III.

THE interesting and affecting conversation which I had with the negro servant produced a sensation not easy to be expressed. As I returned home, I was led into meditation on the singular clearness and beauty of those evidences of faith and conversion of heart to God which I had just seen and heard. How plainly, I thought, it appears that salvation is freely "by grace through faith; and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast"! What but the Holy Spirit, who is the author and giver of the life of grace, could have wrought such a change from the once dark, perverse, and ignorant heathen, to this now convinced, enlightened, humble, and believing Christian? How

manifestly is the uncontrolled sovereignty of the divine will exercised in the calling and translating of sinners from darkness to light ! What a lesson may the nominal Christian of a civilized country sometimes learn from the simple, sincere religion, of a converted heathen !

I afterwards made particular inquiry into this young man's domestic and general deportment. Everything I heard was satisfactory ; nor could I entertain a doubt respecting the consistency of his conduct and character. I had some further conversations with him, in the course of which I pursued such a plan of scriptural instruction and examination as I conceived to be the most suitable to his progressive state of mind. He improved much in reading, carried his Bible constantly with him, and took every opportunity, which his duty to his master's service would allow, for perusing it. I have frequently had occasion to observe that amongst the truly religious poor, who have not had the advantage of being taught to read in early youth, a concern about the soul, and a desire to know the Word of God, have proved effectual motives for their learning to read with great ease and advantage to themselves and others. It was strikingly so in the present case.

I had, for a considerable time, been accustomed to

meet some serious persons once a week, in a cottage at no great distance from the house where he lived, for the purpose of religious conversation, instruction, and prayer. Having found these occasions remarkably useful and interesting, I thought it would be very desirable to take the negro there, in order that there might be other witnesses to the simplicity and sincerity of real Christianity, as exhibited in the character of this promising young convert. I hoped it might prove an eminent mean of grace to excite and quicken the spirit of prayer and praise amongst some of my parishioners, over whose spiritual progress I was anxiously watching.

I accordingly obtained his master's leave that he should attend me to one of my cottage assemblies. His master, who was thoroughly convinced of the extraordinary change, in conduct and disposition, which religion had produced in his servant, was pleased with my attention to him, and always spoke well of his behaviour.

I set out on the day appointed for the interview. The cottage at which we usually assembled was nearly four miles distant from my own residence. My road lay along the foot of the hill mentioned in my last account of the negro, from the summit of which so luxuriant a prospect was seen. On my right hand

the steep acclivity of the hill intercepted all prospect, except that of numerous sheep feeding on its rich and plentiful produce. Here and there the nearly perpendicular side of a chalk pit varied the surface of the hill, contrasting a dazzling white to the sober green of the surrounding bank.

On the left hand, at the distance of nearly half a mile, the tide flowed from the sea into a lake or haven of a considerable length and breadth. At one end of it, fishing and pilot vessels lay at anchor; at the other appeared the parish church; amongst the adjoining woods and fields. The bells were ringing. A gently swelling sound was brought along the surface of the water, and an echo returned from a prominent part of the hill beneath which I was riding. The whole scene was delightful.

I passed some rural and beautifully-situated cottages, which seemed to be formed as fit residences for peace and tranquillity. Each was surrounded by a garden, and each had a little orchard or field adjacent, where the husbandman's cow enjoyed her own pasture, and at the same time prepared rich provision for her owner's family. Such was the wise and considerate allotment which the landlords and the farmers had *here* made for the labouring poor. The wholesome vegetable, the medicinal herb, and the

sweet-scented flower, intermingled as they grew around these little dwellings, and reminded me, as I looked upon them, how comfortable is the lot of the industrious poor, whose hearts have learned the lesson of gratitude in the school of heavenly wisdom. For them as mercifully as for their richest neighbour, the sun shines, the rain descends, the earth brings forth her increase, the flower blossoms, the bird sings. Their wants are few, and contentment makes them less. How great the blessing of being poor in this world, but rich in faith, and a chosen inheritance in a better !

I knew that this was the character of some whose humble but neat and cleanly cottages I passed. A few such features in the prospect rendered it most lovely. Peace be to their memory, both as pilgrims and strangers here, and as ransomed souls, whom I hope to meet in glory hereafter !

The house to which I was travelling was situated at the corner of an oak wood, which screened it both from the burning heat of summer suns and the heavy blasts of winter south-west storms. As I approached it, I saw my friend the negro sitting under a tree and waiting my arrival. He held in his hand a little tract which I had given him. His Bible lay on the ground. He rose with much cheerfulness, saying,—

"Ah, massa, mé very glad to see you. Me t'ink you long time coming."

"William, I hope you are well. I am going to take you with me to a few of my friends, who, I trust, are truly sincere in their religious pursuits. We meet every Wednesday evening for conversation about the things that belong to our everlasting peace, and I am sure you will be a welcome visitor."

"Massa, me not goot enough to be with such goot people. Me great sinner. Dey be goot Christian."

"If you were to ask them, William, they would each tell you they were worse than others. Many of them were once—and that not very long ago—living in an openly sinful manner, ignorant of God, and the enemies of Jesus Christ by thought and deed. But divine grace stopped them in their wicked course, and subdued their hearts to the love and obedience of him and his gospel. You will only meet a company of poor fellow-sinners, who love to speak and sing the praises of redeeming love; and I am sure, William, that is a song in which you will be willing to join them."

"Oh yes, sir! Dat song just do for poor negro."

By this time we had arrived at the cottage garden gate. Several well-known faces appeared in and near the house, and the smile of affection welcomed us as

we entered. It was known that the negro was to visit the little society this evening ; and satisfaction beamed on every countenance as I took him by the hand and introduced him among them, saying,—

“I have brought a brother from Africa to see you, my friends. Bid him welcome in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Sir,” said an humble and pious labourer, whose heart and tongue always overflowed with Christian kindness, “we are at all times glad to see our dear minister, but especially so to-day in such company as you have brought with you. We have heard how merciful the Lord has been to him.—Give me your hand, good friend [turning to the negro]. God be with you, here and everywhere ; and blessed be his holy name for calling sinners—as I hope he has done you and me—to love and serve him for his mercy’s sake.”

Each one greeted him as he came into the house, and some addressed him in very kind and impressive language.

“Massa,” said he, “me not know what to say to all dese goot friends. Me t’ink dis look a little like heaven upon earth.”

He then, with tears in his eyes—which, almost before he spoke, brought responsive drops into those of many present—said, “Goot friends and bredren in

Christ Jesus, God bless you all, and bring you to heaven at de last !”

It was my stated custom, when I met to converse with these cottagers, to begin with prayer and reading a portion of the Scriptures.

When this was ended, I told the people present that the providence of God had placed this young man for a time under my ministry ; and that, finding him seriously disposed, and believing him to be very sincere in his religious profession, I had resolved on baptizing him, agreeably to his own wishes. I added, that I had now brought him with me to join in Christian conversation with us ; for as in olden times they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, in testimony that they thought upon his name (Mal. iii. 16), so I hoped we were fulfilling a Christian and brotherly duty in thus assembling for mutual edification.

Addressing myself to the negro, I said, “ William, tell me who made you.”

“ God, de goot Fader.”

“ Who redeemed you ?”

“ Jesus, his dear Son, who died for me.”

“ Who sanctified you ?”

“ The Holy Ghost, who teach me to know de goot Fader, and his dear Son Jesus.”

"What was your state by nature?"

"Me wicked sinner. Me know not'ing but sin; me do not'ing but sin. My soul more black dan my body."

"Has any change taken place in you since then?"

"Me hope so, massa; but me sometime afraid no."

"If you are changed, who changed you?"

"God, de goot Fader; Jesus, his dear Son; and God, de Holy Spirit."

"How was any change brought about in you?"

"God made me a slave when me was young little boy."

"How, William! would you say God made you a slave?"

"No, massa, no. Me mean, God let me be made slave by white men, to do me goot."

"How to do you good?"

"He take me from de land of darkness, and bring me to de land of light."

"Which do you call the land of light: the West India Islands?"

"No, massa. Dey be de land of Providence; but America be de land of light to me, for dere me first hear goot minister preach. And now, dis place where I am now is de land of more light; for here you teach me more and more how goot Jesus is to sinners."

"What does the blood of Christ do?"

"It cleanse from all sin; and so me hope from my sin."

"Are, then, all men cleansed from sin by his blood?"

"Oh no, massa."

"Who are cleansed and saved?"

"Dose dat have faith in him."

"Can you prove that out of the Bible?"

"Yes, sir: 'He dat believeth on de Son hath everlasting life: and he dat believeth not de Son shall not see life; but de wrath of God abideth on him'" (John iii. 36).

"What is it to have faith?"

"Me suppose dat it is to t'ink much about Jesus Christ, to love him much, to believe all he says to be true, to pray to him very much; and when me feel very weak and very sinful, to t'ink dat he is very strong and very goot, and all dat for my sake."

"And have you such a faith as you describe?"

"O massa! me t'ink sometimes me have no faith at all."

"Why so, William?"

"When me want to t'ink about Jesus Christ, my mind run about after oder t'ings. When me want to love him, my heart soon quite cold. When me want to believe all to be true what he says to sinners, me

den t'ink it is not true for me. When me want to pray, de devil put bat, very bat thoughts into me; and me never t'ank Christ enough. Now, all dis make me sometimes afraid me have no faith."

I observed a very earnest glow of attention and fellow-feeling in some countenances present, as he spoke these words. I then said,—

"I think, William, I can prove that you have faith, notwithstanding your fears to the contrary. Answer me a few more questions. Did you begin to think yourself a great sinner, and to feel the want of a Saviour, of your own self, and by your own thoughts and doings?"

"Oh no. It came to me when me t'ink not'ing about it, and seek not'ing about it."

"Who sent the good minister in America to awaken your soul by his preaching?"

"God, very certainly."

"Who, then, began the work of serious thought in your mind?"

"De goot God. Me could not do it of myself, me sure of dat."

"Do you not think that Jesus Christ and his salvation are the one thing most needful and most desirable?"

"Oh yes; me quite sure of dat."

"Do you not believe that he is able to save you?"

"Yes. He is able to save to de uttermost."

"Do you think he is not willing to save you?"

"Me dare not say dat. He is so goot, so merciful, so kind, to say he will in no wise cast out any dat come to him."

"Do you wish, and desire, and strive to keep his commandments?"

"Yes, massa; because me love him, and dat make me want to do as he say."

"Are you willing to suffer for his sake, if God should call you to do so?"

"Me do t'ink me could die for de love of him. He not t'ink it too much to die for wicked sinner; why should wicked sinner t'ink it much to die for so goot and righteous a Saviour?"

"I think and hope I may say to you, William, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole.'"

Thus ended my examination for the present. The other friends who were in the house listened with the most affectionate anxiety to all that passed. One of them observed, not without evident emotion,—

"I see, sir, that though some men are white and some are black, true Christianity is all of one colour. My own heart has gone with this good man, every word he has spoken."

"And so has mine," gently re-echoed from every part of the room.

After some time passed in more general conversation on the subject of the negro's history, I said, "Let us now praise God for the rich and unspeakable gift of his grace, and sing the hymn of redeeming love,—

" 'Now begin the heavenly theme,
Sing aloud in Jesu's name,' " &c. ;

which was accordingly done. Whatever might be the merit of the natural voices, it was evident there was spiritual melody in all their hearts.

The negro was not much used to our way of singing, yet joined with great earnestness and affection, that showed how truly he felt what he uttered. When the fifth verse was ended—

" Nothing brought him from above,
Nothing but redeeming love"—

he repeated the words, almost unconscious where he was, "No, not'ing, not'ing but redeeming love, bring him down to poor William—not'ing but redeeming love."

The following verses were added and sung by way of conclusion :—

See, a stranger comes to view !
Though he's black, * he's comely too—
Comes to join the choirs above,
Singing of redeeming love.

* Song of Solomon, i. 5.

Welcome, negro ! welcome here !
Banish doubt and banish fear ;
You, who Christ's salvation prove,
Praise and bless redeeming love.

I concluded with some remarks on the nature of salvation by grace, exhorting all present to press forward in the heavenly journey. It was an evening the circumstances of which, had they never been recorded on earth, were yet doubtless registered in the book of remembrance above.

I then fixed the day for the baptism of the negro, and so took leave of my little affectionate circle.

The moon shone bright as I returned home, and was beautifully reflected from the waters of the lake. Harmony and repose characterized the scene. I had just been uniting in the praises of the God of grace and providence ; and now the God of nature demanded a fresh tribute of thanksgiving for the beauties and comforts of creation,—as David sang, “ When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ; what is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou visitest him ? ”

In a few days the negro was baptized, and not long after went on a voyage with his master.

Since that time I have not been able to hear any tidings of him. Whether he yet wanders as a pilgrim

in this lower world, or whether he has joined the heavenly choir in the song of "redeeming love" in glory, I know not. This I do know, he was a monument to the Lord's praise. He bore the impression of the Saviour's image on his heart, and exhibited the marks of divine grace in his life and conversation, with singular simplicity, and unfeigned sincerity.

GIVE TO GOD THE GLORY.

My interviews with the negro suggested the following lines, which are here subjoined, under the title of—

THE NEGRO'S PRAYER.

JESUS, who mak'st the meanest soul
An object of thy care,
Attend to what my heart would speak—
Hear a poor negro's prayer.

For thou, when bleeding on the cross,
My sins and griefs didst bear :
Wherefore, my Lord, thou'lt not refuse
To hear the negro's prayer.

I was a helpless negro boy,
That wandered on the shore ;
Thieves took me from my parents' arms—
They saw their child no more.

And yet the lot which seemed so hard,
God's faithfulness did prove ;
For I was carried far from home
To learn a Saviour's love.

Poor and despised though I was,
Thine arm, O God ! was nigh ;
And when thy mercy first I knew,
Sure none so glad as I.

In ignorance long my soul had dwelt—
A rebel bold I'd been ;
But thy great kindness, O my God !
Saved me from all my sin.

Mine was a wretched state, exposed
To men and angels' view—
A slave to man, a slave to sin,
A slave to Satan too.

But if thy Son hath made me free,
Then am I free indeed !
From powers of darkness, sin, and hell
Thy love my soul has freed.

Lord, send thy Word to that far land
Where none but negroes live :
Teach them the way, the truth, the life,
Which thou alone canst give.

Oh, that my father, mother dear,
Might there thy mercy see !
Tell them what Christ has done for them,
What Christ has done for me.

Whose god is like the Christian's God?
Who can with him compare?
He hath compassion on my soul,
And hears a negro's prayer.

Lord Jesus, thou hast shed thy blood
For thousands such as me :
Though some despise poor negro slave,
I'm not despised by thee.

This is my heart's first wish below,
To prove thy constant care :
Keep me from sin and danger, Lord,
And hear a negro's prayer.

In heaven the land of glory lies :
If I should enter there,
I'll tell the saints and angels too,
Thou heard'st a negro's prayer.





THE COTTAGE CONVERSATION.



S I journeyed late on a summer evening, meditating on the beauties of the prospect around me, while they gradually faded from my sight through the approach of darkness, it grew suddenly quite gloomy, and a black cloud hanging over my head threatened a heavy shower of rain. The big drops began to fall, and an open shed, adjoining to a labourer's cottage, offering me a seasonable shelter, I dismounted from my horse, and found it large enough to protect him as well as myself.

The circumstance reminded me of the happy privilege of the believing sinner, who finds a "refuge from the storm and the blast of the terrible ones in the love of his Redeemer," which prepares him "a covert

from storm and from rain." I went in unperceived : the door of the cottage was half open, and I heard the voices of a poor man, his wife, and some children within.

I was hesitating whether to go into the house and make myself known, or to enjoy in solitude a meditation on the foregoing comparison, which my situation had brought to my mind, when these words, spoken in a calm and affectionate tone, struck me with mingled pleasure and surprise, and determined me not to interrupt the conversation :—

"Indeed, wife, you are in the wrong. Riches would never make us happier, so long as the Lord sees it good that we should be poor."

"Well," replied the wife, "I can see no harm in wishing for more money and better living than we have at present. Other people have risen in the world ; and why should not we ? There's neighbour Sharp has done well for his family, and, for anything I can see, will be one of the richest farmers in the parish, if he live ; and everybody knows he was once as poor as we are ; while you and I are labouring and toiling from morning to night, and can but just get enough to fill our children's mouths and keep ourselves coarsely clothed, and hardly that."

"Wife," answered the man, "having food and

raiment, let us therewith be content. And if it please God that even these things should fall short, let us submit ourselves to God in patience and well-doing ; for he gives us more than we deserve."

"There, now, you are got to preaching again," said the woman ; "you never give me an answer but you must always go to your Bible to help you out."

"And where can I go so well?" replied the husband. "Is it not God's own Word for our instruction?"

"Well that may be, but I don't like so much of it," answered she.

"And I do not like so little of it as I see and hear from you," returned the man.

"Why, that book has taught me that it is an honour and comfort to be a poor man ; and by the blessing of the Spirit of God, I believe and feel it to be true. I have, through mercy, always been enabled to get the bread of honest industry, and so have you ; and though our children feed upon brown bread, and we cannot afford to buy them fine clothes, like some of our vain neighbours, to pamper their pride with, yet, bless the Lord, they are as healthy and clean as any in the parish. Why, then, should you complain? Godliness with contentment is great gain."

"An honour and a comfort to be a poor man, indeed! What nonsense you talk! What sort of

honour and comfort can that be? I am out of patience with you, man!" the wife sharply cried out.

"I can prove it," replied he.

"How?" returned his partner, in no very pleasant tone of voice.

"My dear," said the good man, "hear me quietly, and I will tell you."

"I think it an honour, and I feel it a comfort, to be in that very station of life which my Saviour Jesus Christ was in before me. He did not come into the world as one that was rich and great, but as a poor man, who had not where to lay his head. I feel a blessing in my poverty, because Jesus, like me, was poor. Had I been a rich man, perhaps I should never have known nor loved him; for 'not many mighty, not many noble, are called.' God's people are chiefly found among the base things of the world, and things which are despised. This makes my poverty to be my comfort.

"Besides, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? This thought makes my poverty also to be my honour.

"Moreover, to the poor the gospel was and is preached; and to my heart's delight I find it to be true every Sunday of my life. And is it not plain,

all the neighbourhood through, that while so many of our rich farmers, and tradesmen, and squires are quite careless, or set their faces against the ways of God, and are dead to everything that is gracious and holy, a great number of the poorest people are converted and live? I honour the rich for their station, but I do not envy them for their possessions. I cannot forget what Christ once said: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!'

"Oh, my dear wife, if you did but know how to set a right value upon the precious promises which God has made to the poor, how thankful should I be!

" 'The expectation of the poor shall not perish. He delivereth the poor and needy from him that spoileth him. He has prepared of his goodness for the poor. The poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One; for he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,'—not in gold, but in grace.

"These promises comfort my soul, and would make me happy, even if I were deprived of that which I now enjoy. I can trust my Saviour for this world as well as for the next. 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

"The Lord of his mercy bless you, my dear Sarah, with the grace of a contented mind!"

Here the gracious man stopped ; and whether affected by her husband's discourse, or by any other cause, I know not, but she made no reply. He then said, "Come, children, it is our time for rest ; shut the door, and let us go to prayer."

"Forgive me," said I, laying hold of the door, as the child was obeying her father's orders, "if I ask leave to make one in your family devotions, before I travel homeward. I have heard you, my friend, when you knew it not, and bless God for the sermon which you have this night preached to my heart."

The honest labourer blushed for a moment at this unexpected intrusion and declaration, but immediately said, "Sir, you are welcome to a poor man's dwelling, if you come in the name of the Lord."

I just looked round at the wife, who seemed to be startled at my sudden appearance, and the six fine children who sat near her, and then said, "You were going to pray. I must beg of you, without regarding me, to go on as if I were not here."

The man, whom I could not but love and reverence, with a simple, unaffected, modest, and devout demeanour, did as I requested him. His prayer was full of tender affection and sincerity, expressed with great scriptural propriety, and was in all respects such as became the preacher of those sentiments

which I had overheard him deliver to his wife just before.

When he had finished, each of his children, according to the good old patriarchal custom of better days, kneeled down before him in turn to receive a father's blessing.

It was now late, and the rain was over. I gave the poor man my blessing, and received his in return. I wished them good night, and went onwards to my own home, reflecting with much self-abasement of heart, what an honour and comfort it is to be a poor man, rich in faith.





A VISIT TO THE INFIRMARY.



WENT, a few months since, to visit a parishioner, then in the county infirmary, within some miles of which I reside, and was informed that in an adjoining ward there lay a very good old man, confined by a mortification in his foot, who would take particular satisfaction in any Christian conversation which my time would allow me to afford him.

The nurse conducted me into a room where I found him alone on a bed. The character of his countenance was venerable, cheerful, contented, and pious. His hoary hairs proclaimed him to be aged, although the liveliness in his eye was equal to that of the most vigorous youth.

"How are you, my friend?" I said.

"Very well, sir—very well. Never better in all my life. Thank God for all his mercies!" replied the man, with so cheerful a tone of voice as at once surprised and delighted me.

"Very well! How so? I thought, from what I heard, you were in much pain and weakness," said I.

"Yes, sir; that is true. But I am very well for all that; for God is so good to my soul, and he provides everything needful for my body. The people in the house are very kind; and friends come to see me, and talk and pray with me. Sir, I want nothing but more grace to praise the Lord for all his goodness."

"Why, my friend, you are an old pilgrim; and I am glad to see that you have learned thankfulness as you travel through the wilderness."

"Thankfulness!" quickly returned he. "No, sir; I never did thank the Lord; I never could thank him; no, nor I never shall thank him as I ought, till I get to glory. And then—oh, then!—how I will thank him for what he has done for me!"

Tears of affection filled his eyes as he spoke.

"What a good Master you serve!" I added.

"Ay, sir; if the servant was but as good as the Master. But here I am, a poor old sinner, deserving nothing, and receiving everything which I need.

Sir, I want nothing but more grace to serve him better. I lie here on this bed, and pray and sing by night and day. Sir, you must let me sing you my hymn. I always begin it about four o'clock in the morning, and it keeps my spirits alive all the day through."

Without waiting for my reply, he raised himself up, and in an aged and broken, but very affecting tone of voice, he sang two or three verses expressive of God's goodness to him, and his own desire to live to God's glory. The simplicity, serenity, and heartfelt consolation, with which this venerable disciple went through it, gave a colouring to the whole, and left an impression on my mind which it would be impossible to convey to the reader.

As soon as he had finished his hymn, he said, "Do not be offended, sir, at my boldness. You love the Lord, too, I hope; and then I am sure you won't be angry to hear me praise him. But now, sir, talk to me about Jesus Christ. You are his minister, and he has sent you here to-day to see a poor unworthy soul, that does not deserve the least of his mercies. Talk to me, sir, if you please, about Jesus Christ."

"Neither you nor I are able to talk of him as we ought," I answered; "and yet, if we were to hold our peace, the very stones would cry out."

"Ay, and well they might, sir, cry shame, shame upon us, if we refused to speak of his goodness," said the old man.

"Jesus Christ," I continued, "is a sure refuge, and a present help in time of trouble."

"That's right, sir; so he is."

"Jesus Christ has taken care of you, and watched over you all the days of your life; and he will be your guide and portion in death."

"That's right again, sir; so he will."

"You have committed your soul into his keeping long since, have you not?"

"About forty years ago, sir—about forty years ago (when I first used to hear Mr. Venn and Mr. Berridge) He came to seek and to save me, a vile sinner, who deserved nothing but his wrath. I can never praise him enough."

"Well, my friend, and this very Saviour, Jesus Christ, whom you love, and in whom you trust, lived for you, and died for you. He rose again for you, and has sanctified you by his Holy Spirit, and now lives to make daily intercession for you. And having done all this, do you think he will leave you to perish at last?"

"No, sir," said the old man. "Faithful is He that hath promised, and will do it. Mine, alack! is a

changing heart ; but he changeth not. I believe that he hath laid up a crown of glory for me ; and though the old enemy of souls sometimes tells me I shan't have it, I believe in Christ sooner than in him, and I trust I shall have it at last."

"And do you not find by experience," I added, "that his yoke is easy, and his burden light? His commandments are not grievous, are they?"

"No, sir ; no. It is a man's meat and drink, if he loves the Lord, to do what he bids him."

"Where were you before you came into this infirmary?"

"In the parish workhouse of S——."

"Have you a wife?"

"She died some years since, and got to her heavenly home before me."

"Have you any children?"

"Yes, sir. I have two sons married, and settled in the world with families. One of them has been here to see me lately ; and I hope he is in a good way for his own soul, and brings up his children in the fear of God."

"Have you any worldly cares upon your mind?"

"*Not one*, sir. I am come to this house, I plainly see, to end my days ; for this mortification in my leg must, before it be very long, bring me to the grave."

And I am quite willing, sir, to go, or to wait the Lord's own time. I want nothing, sir, but more grace to praise him." Which last words he often repeated in the course of the conversation.

"You have reason," I said, "to feel thankful that there is such a house as this for poor and sick people to be brought to, for both food, lodging, and medicine."

"That I have, indeed, sir. It is a house of mercies to me, and I am ashamed to hear how unthankful many of the patients seem to be for the benefits which the Lord provides for them here. But, poor creatures, they neither know nor love him. The Lord have mercy upon them, and show them the right way. I should never have known that good way, sir, if he had not taken compassion upon me, when I had none upon myself."

Tears ran down his aged cheeks as he spoke these last words.

"Here," thought I, "is a poor man that is very rich, and a weak man that is very strong."

At this moment the nurse brought in his dinner.

"There, sir, you see, more and more mercies! The Lord takes care of me, and sends me plenty of food for this poor, old, worn-out body."

"And yet," said I, "that poor, old, worn-out body

will one day be renewed, and become a glorified body, and live along with your soul in the presence of God for ever."

"That's right, sir," said the good old man; "so it will. 'Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' But, come, sir," seeing me look at my watch, "you must speak a word to your Master, if you please, as well as *for* him. I will put down my dinner while you pray with me.

I did so, the man often adding his confirmation of what I offered up, by voice, gesture, and countenance, in a manner highly expressive of the agreement of his heart with the language of the prayer.

Having ended, he said, "God be with you, sir, and bless your labours to many poor souls! I hope you will come to see me again, if my life be spared. I am so glad to see those who will talk to me about Jesus Christ, and his precious salvation."

I replied, "May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who carried them through the days of their pilgrimage, and brought them safe to a city which hath foundations, bring you there too, and bless you all the remaining days of your journey till you get home! I am going to see several serious friends this evening, who would be glad, I know, to receive a message from one who has had so much experi-

ence of a Saviour's mercies. What shall I say to them?"

"Tell them, sir, with my Christian love and respects, that you have been to see a poor dying old man, who wants nothing at all in this world but more grace to praise the Lord with."

So ended our first interview. I could not help reflecting, as I returned homewards, that, as the object of my journey to the infirmary had been to carry instruction and consolation myself to the poor and the sick, so the poor and the sick were made instrumental to the conveying of both instruction and consolation to my own heart in a very superior degree.

I saw him four or five times afterwards, and always found him in the same happy, patient, thankful, and edifying state of mind and conversation. The last time I was with him, he said, "Sir, I long to be at my heavenly home; but I am willing to remain a traveller as long as my Lord and Master sees good."

He died* not long after my last sight of him, in the steadfast assurance of faith, and with a full hope of immortality.

* The foregoing conversation took place on September 22, 1808, and is faithfully related. J—— S——, the good old man, died in the infirmary in December 1808.







